

Study Abroad – An Alternative Learning Method for Classical History Studies

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Abstract

The academic study of Classical and Ancient History is often confined to the examination of primary and secondary written texts. While this method provides great insight into the ancient Greco-Roman world, studying abroad offers an incomparable opportunity and an alternative method of learning to students who would not be touched or galvanized by typical classroom techniques.

The UB Classics in the Mediterranean study abroad program provides a first person, on-site analysis of Classical sites in Italy. This allows students to gain a first-hand understanding of the classical world. An Alternative Learning Method for Students of Classical Studies will illustrate what UB Students experience when taking courses in Classical History domestically compared to the learning methods students enjoy when studying in Italy on the UB Classics in the Mediterranean winter program.



Picture of Temple of Hera in Paestum, Italy

Benefits of Studying Abroad

Due to the unique way in which the ancient city of Pompeii was destroyed, many of the buildings and artifacts discovered at the site are nearly perfectly preserved.

By travelling to and studying the historic site of Pompeii, students experience an alternative method of learning Classical History by examining and analyzing important sites and artifacts first hand. Additionally, studying abroad offers students further information on Classical History that otherwise would not be covered in the classroom.



Picture of Pompeian Forum with Mt. Vesuvius in background

Traditional Classroom Learning Methods

Traditional learning methods for students of Classical History typically includes the analysis of classical Latin texts to gain a better comprehension of Roman society and events in antiquity. This is illustrated in the following passage from a letter from Pliny the Younger, describing first-hand the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius and Pompeii in AD79.

It was not clear at that distance from which mountain the cloud was rising (it was afterwards known to be Vesuvius); its general appearance can best be expressed as being like an umbrella pine, for it rose to a great height on a sort of trunk and then split off into branches, I imagine because it was thrust upwards by the first blast and then left unsupported as the pressure subsided, or else it was borne down by its own weight so that it spread out and gradually dispersed.

"The Destruction of Pompeii, 79 AD," EyeWitness to History
www.eyewitnesstohistory.com (1999)

Study Abroad Learning Methods

Below are pictures of artifacts from Pompeii taken during the UB Classics in the Mediterranean program.



Statue of Eumachia (left):

Archaeologists discovered this statue in a large building on the Pompeian Forum. The statue depicts a Pompeian woman, Eumachia, with a dedicator inscription. This statue and corresponding building ('Eumachia Building') are evidence of one of the first recorded women landowners in history. The statue also provides insight into Roman sculpture art in the first century AD.

Plaster Cast of Roman Citizen (right):

The statue-like figure in this image is a plaster-cast of holes in the ground found at Pompeii when archaeologists first excavated the site. These holes were created by the bodies of Pompeian citizens who were covered by ash during the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius. These casts supply important information as to how ancient Pompeians died during the eruption as well as what everyday life looked like in Pompeii.



UB Classics in the Mediterranean

The UB Classics in the Mediterranean study abroad program takes students on a 15 day tour of Italy, led by a UB Classics Professor. This program introduces students to classical historic sites such as Pompeii, Paestum, and Rome, and studies various classical artifacts in museums across Italy. Students spend 10 days in Rome and 5 days in Cuma, a suburb of Naples.

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